Public Comment Toolkit:

Protecting Fair Solar Rates in Colorado Springs

What It's About

Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) is now proposing major changes to how customers with rooftop solar are billed. These changes could significantly increase electric bills for solar households, reduce the value of existing and future solar investments, and make it harder for Colorado Springs families to go solar in the future.

What CSU is Proposing

CSU has proposed two new rate options for customers with rooftop solar:

Option 1: Energy Wise with Grid Access

This would become the standard solar rate and would
- Add a new solar-only grid access charge of about $1 per day
- Move customers to time-of-day pricing
- Replace our 1 to 1 net metering structure with separate on-peak / off-peak bill credits

Option 2: Demand Charge

- Maintains the 1 to 1 energy exchange and monthly rollover
- Adds a monthly demand charge based on customer's highest 15-minute on-peak electricity demand

Key Points to Include in Your Comment

First, prioritize making it personal. Share your own story about solar, your energy bills, or why you care about fair rates. Then connect to one or more of these points:

- A lower bill isn't proof of a subsidy. Solar owners invested their own money to generate electricity so it makes sense that they purchase less from CSU.
- CSU has not proved that solar customers are failing to cover the actual costs they impose on the grid
- A transparent analysis should consider both the costs of serving solar customers and the value of their reduced electricity use, lower on-peak demand, and exported energy to the local grid. Otherwise it's an incomplete equation to justify added costs to one set of customers
- CSU's own analysis shows solar customers use less electricity during CSU's system peak than their individual maximum 15-minute demand. Rates should reflect how customers actually contribute to system costs
- Families made significant investments based on anticipated long-term savings. Changing the rate structure would alter the financial sense of these investments and is a course change made in bad-faith

Best Practices for Speaking to Your Council Member

What you should do!	What you should NOT do.
● Introduce yourself (name and where you live) ● Share your personal story on why solar or fair net metering policy matters to you ● Be clear and concise (1–3 minutes) ● Say whether you oppose CSU's proposal ● End with a clear ask: "Please reject CSU's proposal and protect fair net metering." ● Practice	● Use profanity or personal attacks ● Rely only on template talking points (personal stories carry far more weight) ● Try to prove an entire case in one comment ● Worry about being a technical expert. Your expertise is in your lived experience and your connection to solar ● Worry about memorizing your comment. It's ok to pause and use notes for reminders

Preparing Your Public Comment

1) A good comment shares who you are, why this issue affects you, and what you are asking the council to do.

2) You will have up to three minutes to speak. When writing your comment down in preparation, consider the following:

- People naturally speak about 120-150 words per minute at a conversational pace
- A written three minute comment should be around 360-450 words
- Consider keeping your written comment to 380 - 400 words to that, when spoken, it feels smooth, unrushed, and leaves room for you to pause or emphasize something you are saying

3) Consider your experience with solar or net metering first. Why are you passionate to speak on this? What is your direct connection to this issue, or what do you (or friends or family) stand to lose if net metering is lost. Examples of how you might be directly impacted:

- Solar homeowner - who invested money in solar to lower your energy costs
- Fixed income or retiree - You invested in solar partly to create more stable, predictable energy costs. New charges would make utility bills difficult to manage or negate the long-term financial planning behind the investment
- Parent/family - You chose, or hope to choose, solar to lower household expenses over the long term. Rates that dramatically extend that payback period make that investment harder for families who need avenues to lower their monthly bills.
- Solar customer with financing - You may still be paying for your solar system. Your financing decision was based partly on expected utility savings, and significantly altering those savings impacts an investment you made in good faith

Example Comment

My name is _____ and I live in the Austin Estates neighborhood with my husband and two children. We installed rooftop solar three years ago, and it was a big investment for our family. But we took the leap because we saw it as a way to lower our bills and protect ourselves against rising energy costs.

I'm here today because I'm concerned about CSU's proposed changes to solar rates and what they could mean for families like mine. CSU has suggested that solar customers aren't paying their fair share to the grid, but they haven't actually demonstrated this in their own analysis.

Yes, my electric bill is lower after installing solar. We spent thousands of dollars of our own money on a system that generates electricity, so I buy less electricity from CSU. But a lower bill isn't proof of a subsidy.

To prove a cost shift, we need to know what it actually costs CSU to serve solar customers, and we also need to count the value our systems provide. When my panels generate more electricity than my home needs, that electricity doesn't disappear. It goes onto CSU's grid and right to my neighbors. Rooftop solar can also reduce the amount of electricity CSU needs to generate or purchase. Those benefits have value, and they should be part of the equation before CSU concludes that solar customers aren't paying their fair share.

We made a significant financial decision based on the commitment that generating our own electricity would help us save money over the life of our system. Changing the rules could significantly reduce the value of an investment we made in good faith.

I'm asking you not to approve solar-specific charges based on an unproven cost shift. Please maintain fair net metering and require CSU to provide a transparent analysis that looks at both the actual costs of serving solar customers and the value that rooftop solar provides.

Thank you.